DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 148 073 EC 103 456

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TITLE Who Are the Deaf Children in "Mainstream" Programs? Research Bulletin: Series R, No. 4.
INSTITUTION Gallaudet Coll., Washington, D.C. Office of Demographic Studies.
PUB DATE Oct 77
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf (48th, Los Angeles, California, June, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aurally Handicapped; Elementary Secondary Education; *Regular Class Placement; *Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the extent of integrated placement (Mainstreaming) of hearing impaired children in the United States and describes a variety of educationally salient characteristics of these students. As compared with hearing impaired children in other types of educational programs, students in integrated programs are reported to have significantly less severe hearing loss, higher family incomes, and other distinctive characteristics. It is noted that programs are presently serving a group of hearing impaired children who are very different on many educationally critical dimensions from those children who attend other types of special education programs. (Author)

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ED148073

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WHO ARE THE DEAF CHILDREN IN 'MAINSTREAM' PROGRAMS?

Michael A. Karchmer
Raymond J. Trybus

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the extent of integrated placement ("mainstreaming") of hearing impaired children in the United States and describes a variety of educationally salient characteristics of these students. As compared with hearing impaired children in other types of educational programs, students in integrated programs tend to have significantly less severe hearing losses, higher family incomes, and other distinctive characteristics. It is clear that integrated programs are presently serving a group of hearing impaired children who are very different on many educationally critical dimensions from those children who attend other types of special education programs.

EC 103 456

OFFICE OF DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES
Gallaudet College
Washington, D.C.

October, 1977

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This paper was originally prepared for presentation at the 48th meeting of the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, Los Angeles, California, June, 1977.

As is true of all products of the Office of Demographic Studies, this paper represents the efforts of all members of the ODS staff. Writing a report for publication is merely the last of many steps. The authors therefore acknowledge their debt to all members of the ODS staff, and wish especially to thank Marius Paquin for his contribution to the preparation of this report.

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Who are the Dear Children in 'Mainstream' Programs?

Michael A. Karchmer
Raymond J. Trybus

The issue of "integrating" or "mainstreaming" hearing impaired children is no longer a new one; yet it is generating ever-increasing attention, especially under the influence of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142). The literature is full of discussions, proposals, and arguments about why we should and why we shouldn't, of how to and how not to, of how we do it and how they do it.

This paper will take a different focus. The primary mission of the Office of Demographic Studies is to describe the current realities of the field of education of hearing impaired children--so that from knowledge of what now is, educators can move deliberately to what could or should be. This paper, then, will concentrate on some basic descriptive information on the current state of "mainstreaming" or "integrating" hearing impaired children (these two terms will be used here as equivalent and interchangeable). How many hearing impaired children are in mainstream settings? What kinds of children are they? Are they much the same kinds of children as those served in other types of educational settings?

The information presented here was drawn from two main sources: first, the Annual Survey of Hearing Impaired Children and Youth for the 1975-76 school year; second, from a random subsample of a national stratified random sample of hearing impaired children who were studied in detail in the spring of 1974. The 1975-76 data are based on information collected on 49,427 children, while the 1974 data are based on a national sample of 997 children.

Some definitions are in order. For simplicity of presentation, educational programs have been grouped into four broad types. Residential schools for the deaf need little more definition than the term itself, except to indicate that not all students in such programs actually live at the school; between 15% and 20% of students in residential schools attend on a day basis and live at home. Day schools for the deaf are those facilities which are specifically for deaf children, but which provide no residential accommodations; most of them have "School for the Deaf" or comparable words in their official name. Full-time classes refer to situations in which essentially all of the deaf child's school time is spent in a class consisting only of hearing impaired children, the class itself being located in a local school which is not limited to hearing impaired children. "Integrated" (or "mainstream") is here taken to mean situations in which the hearing impaired child spends all or part of the school day in classes with hearing children. This includes

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"part-time classes" where part of a child's day is spent in a class with other deaf children, and part in classes with hearing children. Also included are "resource room" programs in which the deaf child is in classes with hearing children but at certain times or for certain subjects goes to a "resource room" for special assistance. Also included are "itinerant programs" in which the deaf child is in classes with hearing children, and receives in addition the periodic services of a teacher of the hearing impaired or similar professional who visits the child at the school. Finally, the term includes situations in which the deaf child receives all educational services along with hearing children, and receives only occasional follow-up or other minimal services to monitor progress and to assure that the placement continues to be appropriate. Some children with hearing impairments receive their education in other settings, such as schools, classes, or institutions for the multiply handicapped, or without benefit of any special education services, but these children will not be included in this report because their needs and educational placements are sufficiently diverse and complex so as to require special description.

Figure 1 shows the relative proportions of the population served by these various program types. Residential schools serve the largest single group, although that group is now a decided minority in the overall picture. The three main types of integrated programs together serve 19% of the population, or about one hearing impaired child in five.

The major program types serve somewhat different age groups as shown in Figure 2. While half of residential school children are age 15 or above, less than one in five children in full-time classes have reached that age.

The most important difference among program types, namely the degree of hearing loss of the children served, is illustrated in Figure 3. While nearly two-thirds of the children in residential schools are profoundly deaf (i.e., 91 dB or greater loss in the better ear), only 18% of those in integrated programs have profound losses. In Figure 4, the same facts are shown from a different perspective. As the severity of the hearing loss increases, the proportion enrolled in integrated programs declines rapidly. Thus, while 82% of those students with a loss of less than 27 dB in the better ear are in integrated programs, only 8% of those with a profound loss in the better ear are so served. This is not at all surprising, but it makes clear that mainstream programs are enrolling a different group of children from those served in the other types of programs.

Mainstream programs enroll two to three times as many post-lingually deaf children as do the other programs (see Figure 5); the impact of post-lingual onset on the educational process needs little elaboration.

Figure 6 indicates that the integrated group has a somewhat higher proportion of white children than the other program types, and it clearly demonstrates that, on a national basis, the day schools serve a predominantly non-white population. Since race and income are so closely related in the United States, the results shown in Figure 7 are not surprising.

The integrated programs enroll the highest proportion of children from high income families (i.e., over $20,000 annually) and the lowest proportion of very low income families (under $5,000 annually). The day schools show just the opposite pattern. Since education and income are related, Figure 8 indicates a similar pattern. Children in integrated programs have the highest proportion of college-educated fathers (36%), while children in day schools have the lowest (19%).

Some other differences among the program types can be seen in Table 1. Integrated programs have the lowest proportion of children with two deaf parents, and they enroll the highest proportion (74%) of those children who have "intelligible" or "very intelligible" speech, as rated by their teachers. Somewhat surprisingly, integrated programs do not report the highest levels of hearing aid use, but this is apparently related, at least in part, to the high proportion of mild and very mild hearing losses in this group (Karchmer & Kirwin, in press).

This is where mainstreaming is at the present time. It will be interesting and of critical importance to trace the changes in this picture over the next few years under the influence of P.L. 94-142. For the present, however, it is clear that the integrated programs are generally serving a group of hearing impaired children who are very different on many educationally critical dimensions from those children who attend other types of special education programs.

Reference

Karchmer, M., & Kirwin, L. The Use of Hearing Aids by Hearing Impaired Students in the United States. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet College Office of Demographic Studies, in press.

FIGURE 1 WHERE DO HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL?
(1976, N = 49,427)

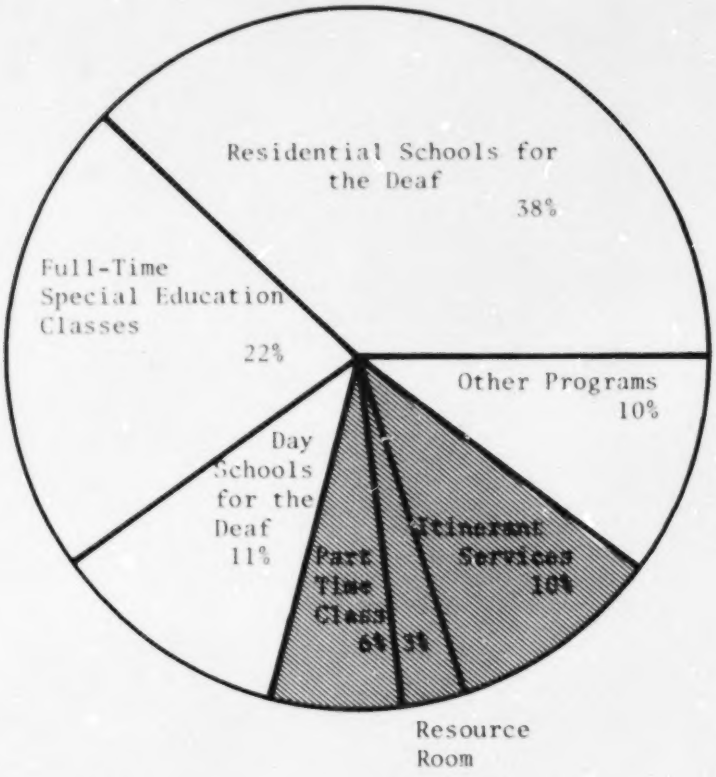


FIGURE 2 PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLED STUDENTS WHO ARE AGE 15 OF OLDER

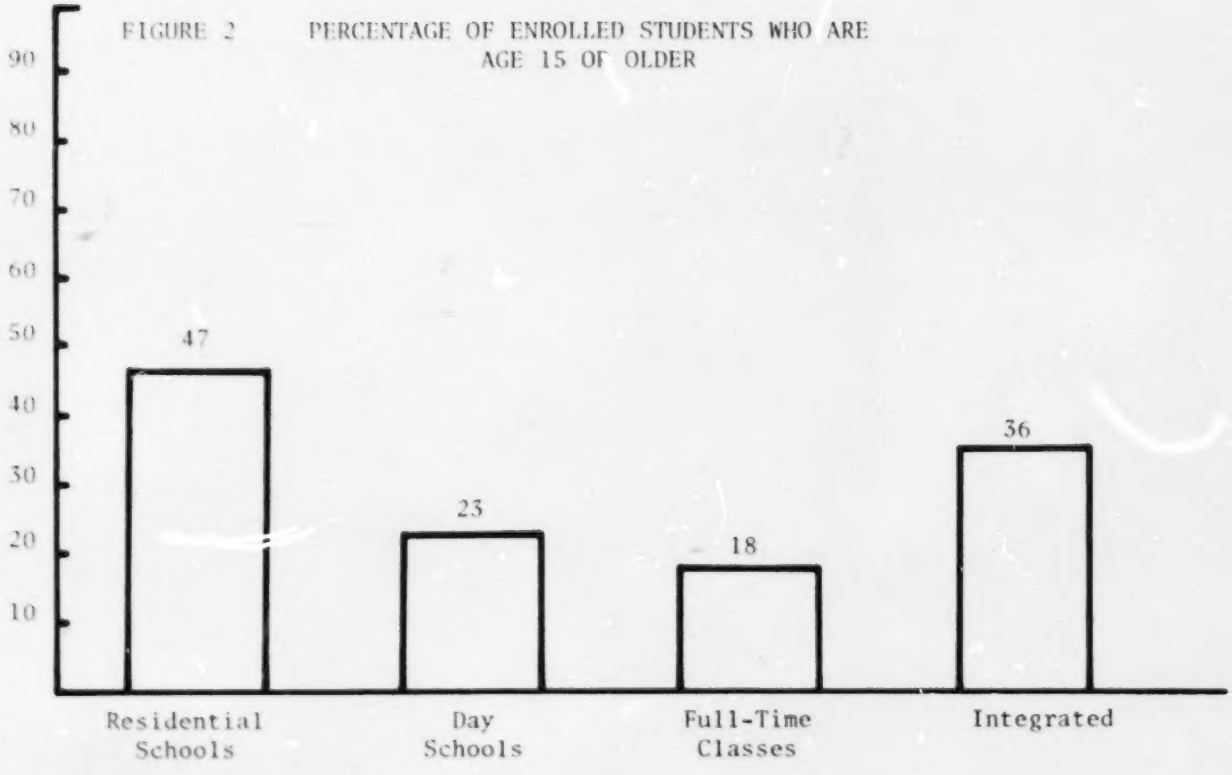
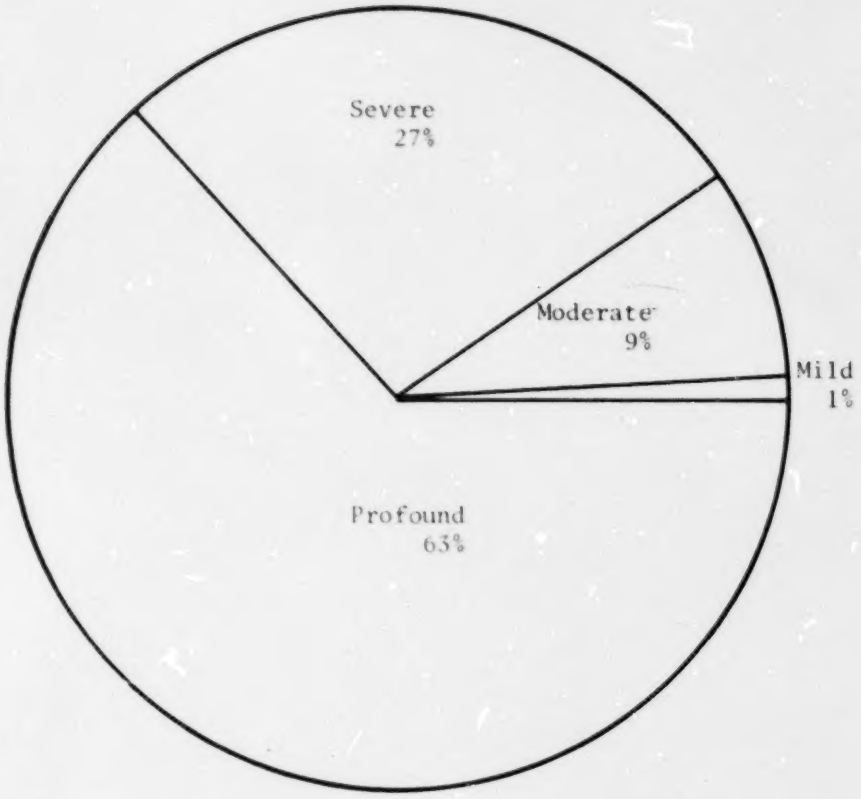
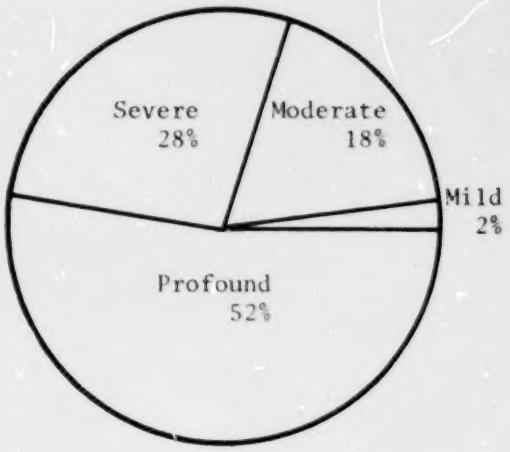


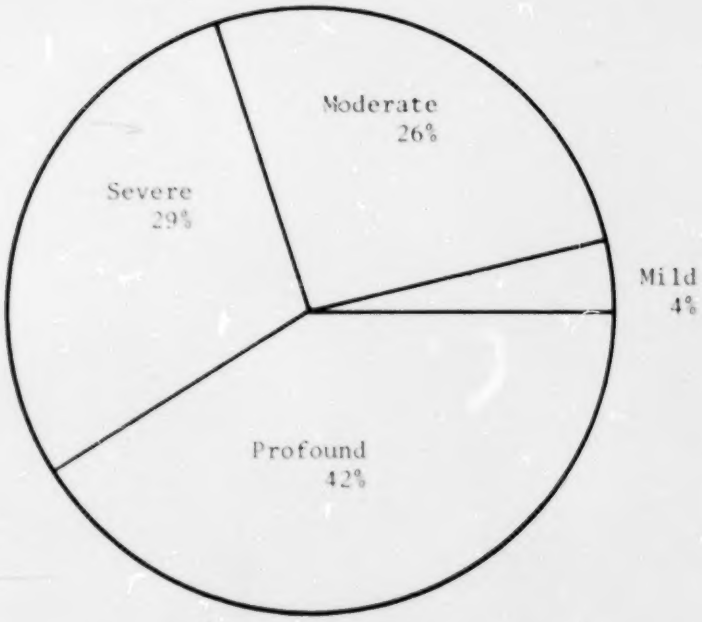
FIGURE 3 DISTRIBUTION OF HEARING LOSS BY TYPE OF PROGRAM



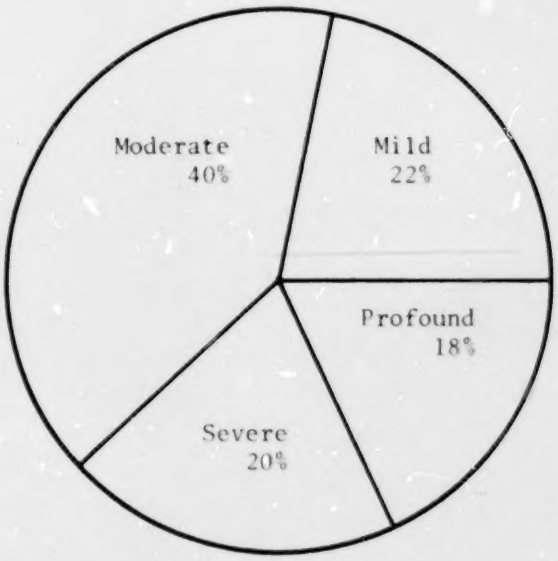
Residential Schools
(N=17,795)



Day Schools
(N=5,150)



Full-Time Classes in Local Public Schools
(N=10,314)



Integrated Programs
(N=8,794)

FIGURE 4 PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN INTEGRATED PROGRAMS
BY DEGREE OF HEARING LOSS

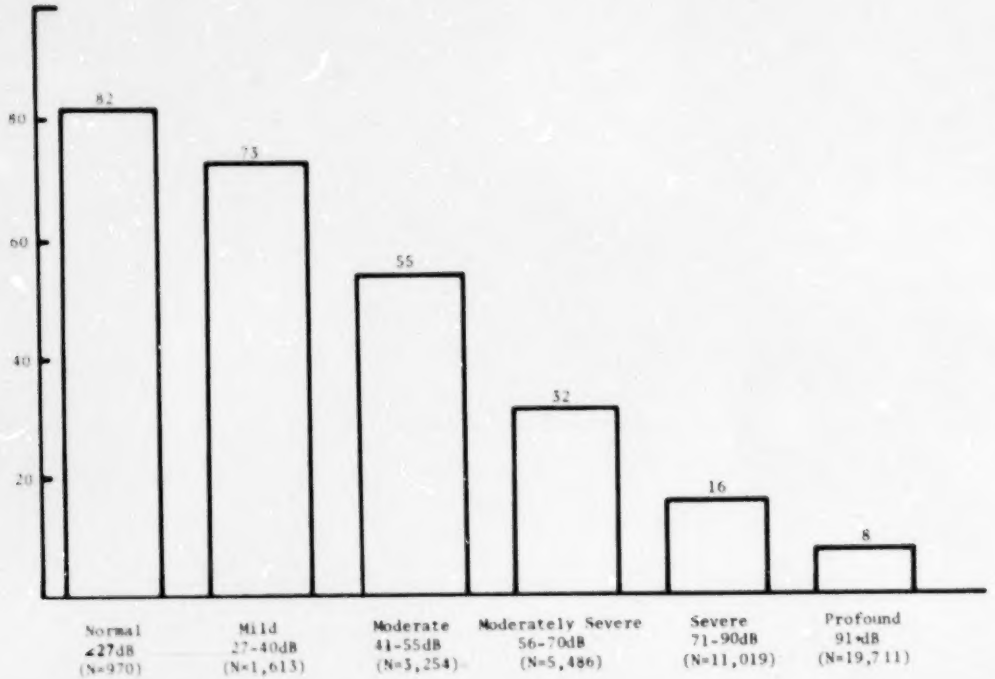


FIGURE 5 PERCENTAGE OF POST-LINGUALLY DEAFENED CHILDREN
BY PROGRAM TYPE

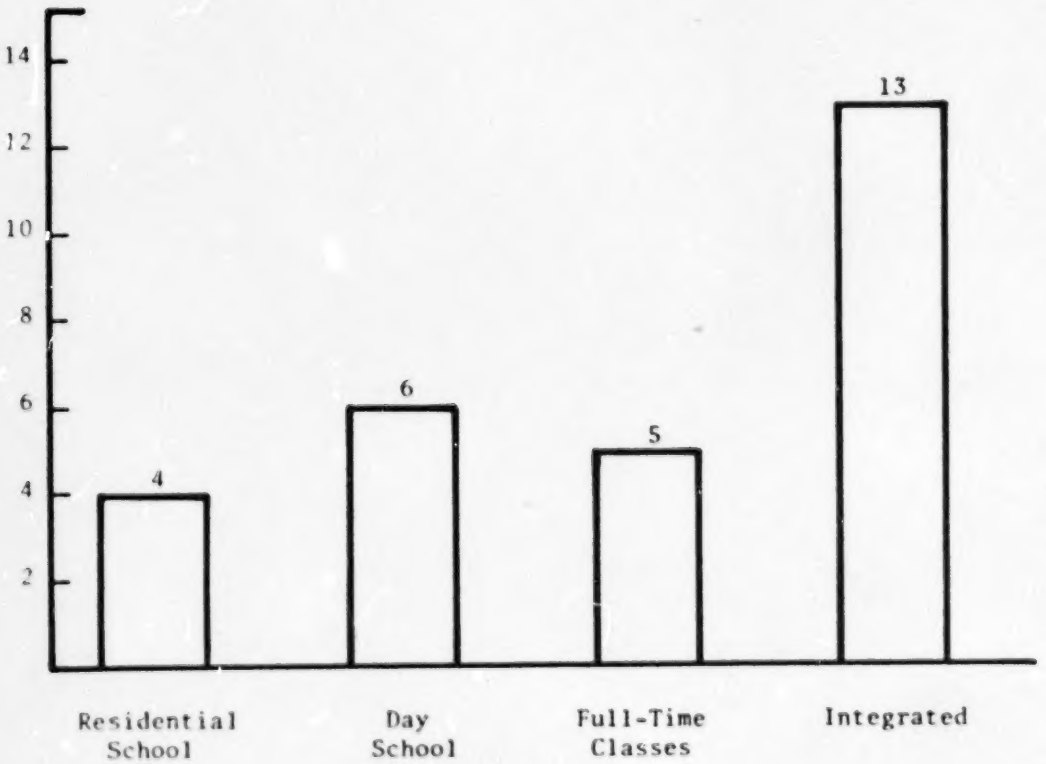


FIGURE 6 PERCENTAGE OF WHITE CHILDREN IN EACH PROGRAM TYPE

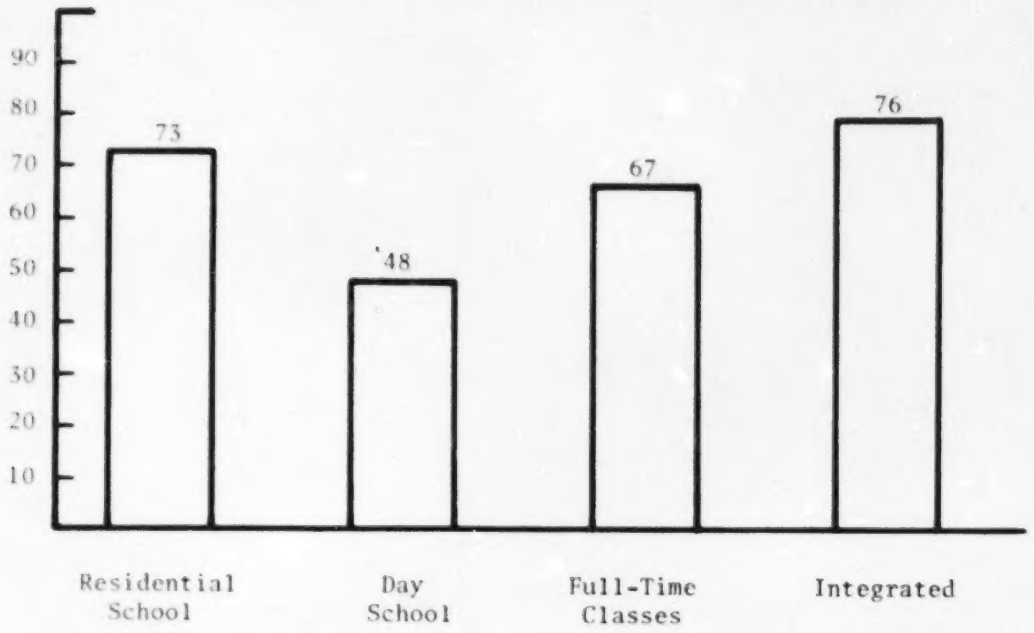
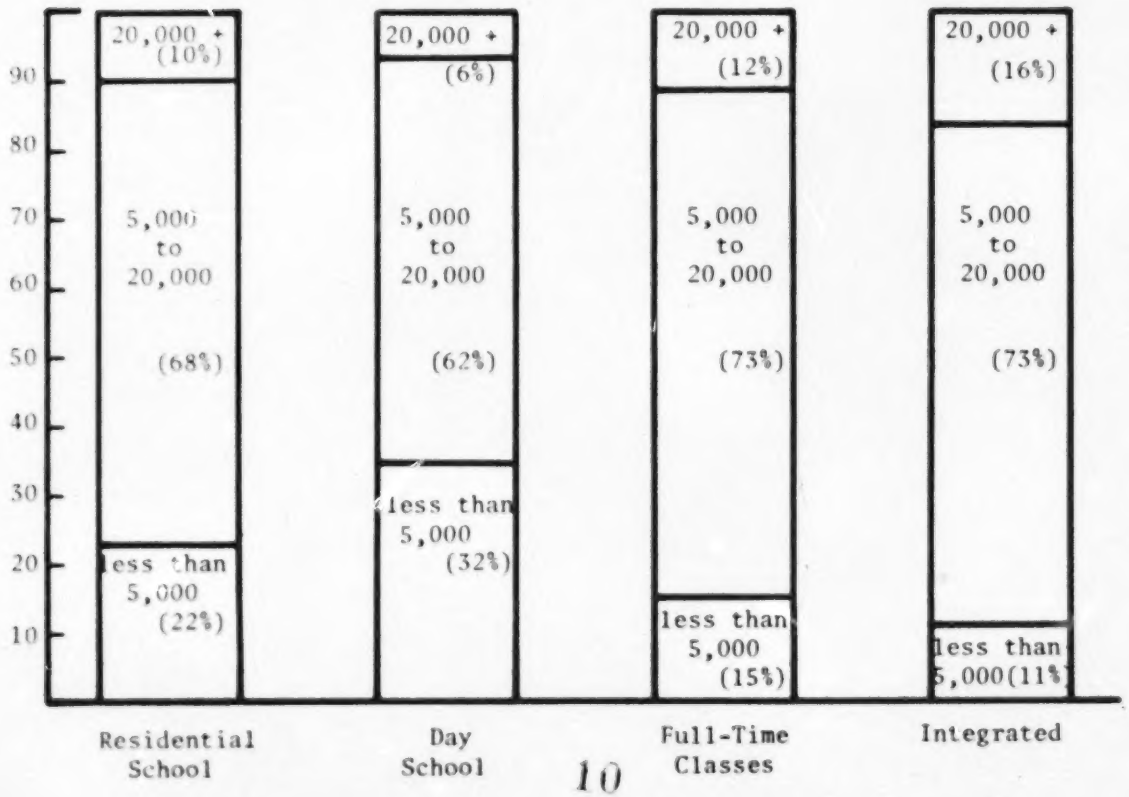


FIGURE 7 INCOME DISTRIBUTION BY PROGRAM TYPE
(in thousands of dollars)



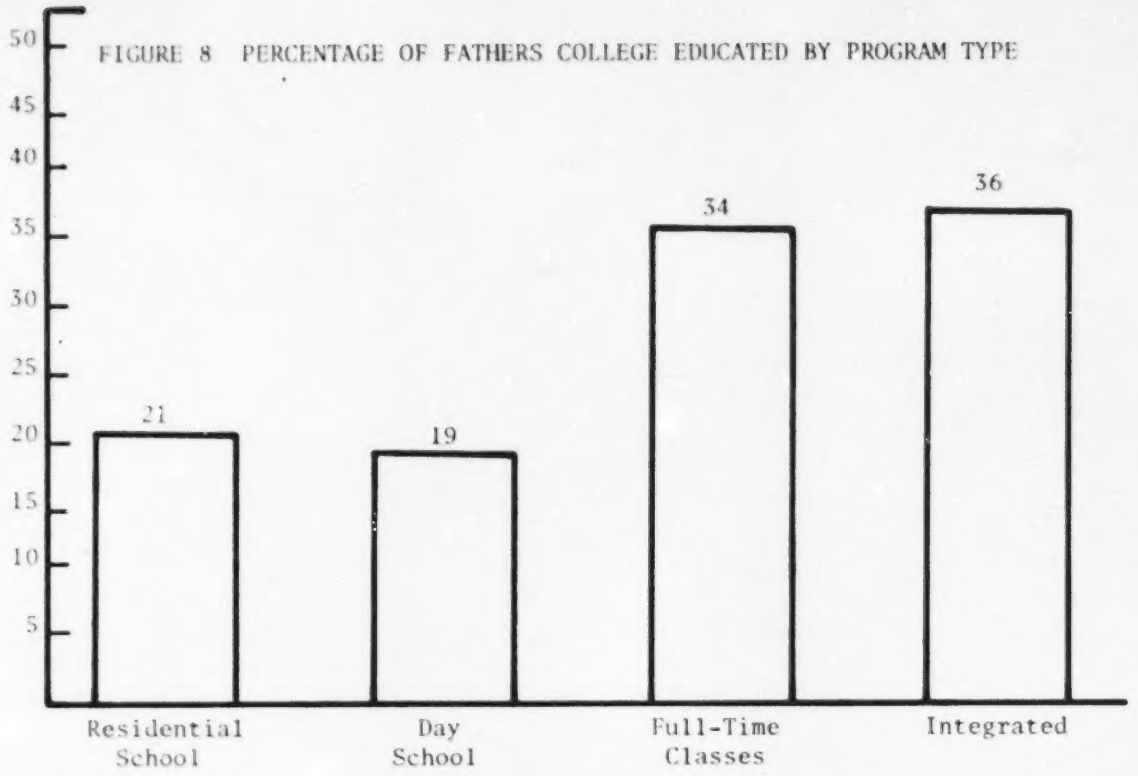


FIGURE 8 PERCENTAGE OF FATHERS COLLEGE EDUCATED BY PROGRAM TYPE

TABLE 1 COMPARISONS BY PROGRAM TYPE

	PERCENTAGE WITH DEAF PARENTS	PERCENTAGE WHO NEVER WEAR AID	PERCENTAGE WITH INTELLIGIBLE SPEECH
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS	4.8	30	31
DAY SCHOOLS	1.5	10	43
FULL-TIME CLASSES	2.2	7	52
INTEGRATED	0.8	17	74

THE OFFICE OF DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES

The Office of Demographic Studies was established in 1968 to serve as a national statistical center for the field of deafness. Its purpose is to collect, analyze, and publish information on hearing impaired persons, to provide tabulations, national sampling frames, and other data-oriented services to special educational programs and to professionals in the field, to collaborate in cooperative research projects, and to serve as consultant and resource for projects involving data collection and analysis.

The data collected by the Office are confidential; no information which would permit the identification of an individual or cooperating school as the source of that information is ever released without the necessary written permission. Within the limits of this confidentiality, the Office actively encourages the use of its information and services by administrators, researchers, teachers, and others providing services to hearing impaired persons.

In its work of developing and disseminating useful information, the Office has the benefit of the guidance and advice of its National Advisory Committee, whose names are listed earlier in this publication. Among its members are hearing and deaf individuals, administrators, teachers and specialists from other areas within the field of hearing impairment. Every attempt is made to maintain a wide diversity of interests and competencies, as well as geographic representation, among its members.

The Office of Demographic Studies is a part of Gallaudet College, which receives substantial support for its programs and services from the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The computer work for this project was made possible by access to the equipment and facilities of the Gallaudet College Computer Center. Gallaudet College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

The Office of Demographic Studies has published numerous articles and monographs on hearing impaired students. For further information contact:

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